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Senate

THE IMPERATIVENESS OF FULL WITHDRAWAL

Mr. JAVITS. Mr. President, I have chosen this time to report to the Senate on my visit to Vietnam very recently, because I think it bears critically and directly upon the vote on the McGovern-Hatfield amendment.

My visit to Vietnam on May 23, 24, and 25, which was my third visit there—the second within 18 months—convinced me that there is nothing further to be gained there commensurate with the price we are paying at home and abroad, to justify the continued presence of U.S. troops there. The South Vietnamese are now in as good a position as they are ever likely to be to stand on their own feet. I found several indications that the survivability of South Vietnam might actually be increased by a total U.S. withdrawal as soon as possible.

The new political ferment in Vietnamese thinking and attitudes, catalyzed by substantial U.S. troop reductions—for which the President is entitled to all credit—and the upcoming elections for Members of the National Assembly and for President was the most hopeful thing I encountered. If Vietnamese leaders felt confident continued U.S. aid on the order of magnitude of \$2 billion per year, it is my impression—and this is my profound conclusion from my visit there—that their resistance to a rapid and complete U.S. withdrawal would diminish significantly.

A factor of very great importance is the heroin epidemic among U.S. servicemen in Vietnam. It is a monstrous and unacceptable situation. Unless it is rapidly brought under control, the American people may feel they have no choice but to demand the immediate withdrawal of all U.S. forces to save their sons from the tragic and debasing fate of heroin addiction.

Another factor of critical importance is the real worry about deteriorating morale and discipline in U.S. forces. This is epitomized by "fragging" incidents, and is extracting a real toll. U.S. national security could be jeopardized in future years by the continuance of our Armed Forces in Vietnam due to the deep damage to our military services—especially the Army—now being inflicted by the dissension and indiscipline which is a serious problem in Vietnam.

Full withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam at the earliest feasible date is an imperative, in my judgment. That is why I am a cosponsor of the Hatfield-McGovern amendment and why I am confirmed rather than dissuaded by my recent visit to Vietnam that we must establish a date certain for full U.S. military withdrawal. I cannot favor a residual or transitional force as now planned by the administration. It is an invitation to massive reentry by U.S. forces. I feel the ARVN—the Army of the Republic of Vietnam—can find means other than such a U.S. presence in Vietnam to maintain security, provided South Vietnam develops—a viable sense of nationhood.

My visit to Vietnam was part of a very recent six-nation fact-finding tour undertaken as a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. While in Vietnam I had discussions with the following: President Thieu, who received me very courteously; Vice President Ky; Foreign Minister Lam; General Duong Van ("Big") Minh, the much discussed possible other opponent to the President; Senators Chieu, Vu Van Mau, Tran Van Don; Professors Bong and Huy of the Captien Party, and high-ranking Vietnamese civil servants.

I also saw our own people, Ambassador Bunker; Deputy Ambassador Berger; General Abrams; Ambassador Cplby, Director of CORDS; AID Director Mossler; JUSPAO Director Nickel; Economic Counsellor Cooper; III Corps Advisor Funkhouser; Embassy Political Officer Calvin Mehlert and others. Subsequently, in Paris, I had a meeting with Ambassador Habib of our Vietnam negotiating mission.

The major findings of my trip to Vietnam are summarized under the following.

VIETNAMESE POLITICAL SITUATION

The Vietnamese parliamentary elections scheduled for August—and especially the presidential election scheduled for October—have stimulated considerable political activity, interest and expectancy in South Vietnam. This is the case not only for the Thieu regime and its parliamentary allies now in power but also for the anti-Communist opposition which seems to be able to function within the present political system. I noticed that because it is noteworthy and significant.

The political plans and activities of the Communist opposition, as well as of the non-Communist opposition which may not be functioning openly, were not well-known, or at least not much discussed. However, I was told that the Vietcong had "legitimized" significant numbers of its cadre, through the GVN's Chieu Hoi ("Reconciliation") program for defectors and there was speculation that Vietcong sympathizers would be instructed to vote for the leading "peace" candidates.

The American role in the Vietnamese presidential election was a subject of great interest, speculation, and suspicion. It is just assumed that the U.S. is somehow favoring President Thieu for reelection. In this regard, I learned that U.S. personnel have received strict, detailed instruction to be completely non-partisan. Nonetheless, the very close working relationship between President Thieu and the leading U.S. official necessary for the conduct of business has engendered widespread suspicion of U.S. impartiality and of U.S. intentions as regards the Vietnamese electoral process.

I do not counsel that our people stop these relations. They cannot do so. But it does make it important for the United States to show is neutrality in every way possible in respect to this election—and not just on the date of the polling.

In this regard, the presidential election law recently maneuvered through the assembly by President Thieu—which reportedly is designed to prevent Vice President Ky and others from qualifying as candidates—ought properly to be a matter of grave concern to our Government.

There are two views on the election. The U.S. officialdom is quite optimistic about the prospects for achieving political stability through the upcoming Vietnamese presidential election. It is felt that the achievements of the last 4 years, in terms of improved military security, political stability, and economic improvement and rural reforms, will be reflected positively in the October polling. The expectation is that a strong new mandate will be given to the winner, enabling the government to survive the U.S. withdrawal. It is assumed in this calculation that there will be a residual force and large-scale aid.

Skeptics and opponents of the Thieu government—of whom there seem to be many more than there were a year ago—are much less sanguine. Corruption and social injustice are the two most prevalent charges leveled at the Thieu government and the administrative competence of the Government is sharply disputed. Three pessimistic scenarios for the election are heard in Saigon. The first is that President Thieu will egregiously “steal” the election—while the U.S. Embassy looks the other way—and morale will collapse as a result. Second, is that General Minh will defeat Thieu in a three way race which includes Marshal Ky and that the succeeding government will lack the strength to stand up against the Communist assault. Third, is that President

Thieu's election law will backfire by leaving him without any opponent—thus discrediting Thieu and the Americans, and provoking a strong adverse reaction in U.S. public opinion to accelerate the U.S. withdrawal.

I do not necessarily subscribe to any of these theories. But I think that this election law is a danger so far as the United States is concerned. I hope very much that we will keep that sharply in mind. That could be the change which could be decisive in respect of the attitude the world takes towards the election.

War weariness is said to be very widespread in Vietnam. Nonetheless, I gained the impression—and I advance this to my colleagues only as an impression—of a certain sense of buoyancy and optimism among Vietnamese. This is related to an understandable sense of release from the massive and pervasive tutelage of the Americans, with their western ways, now that it is accepted that the United States is withdrawing, and has already done so in substantial numbers. It is said that anti-Americanism is now more open and widespread but few thought it would be a major issue in the foreseeable future.

MILITARY SITUATION AND VIETNAMIZATION

I found general agreement regarding the steady improvement of the conventional military situation in South Vietnam since my last visit 18 months ago. The level of fighting is reduced, security has improved and expanded, the ARVN is better equipped, better trained and more effective in combat. There are grounds for skepticism on several counts, however. The performance of ARVN units in Laos, and more recently in Cambodia, resulting in retreats, which the press has widely characterized as disorganized, has raised questions regarding the capacity of the ARVN to stand up to North Vietnamese regular forces when American support units have been withdrawn.

Within South Vietnam, the Communists have, for the most part, scaled down the level of fighting to protracted, or guerrilla, war and terrorism. Despite the scaling down of the fighting, and despite the large expansion and impressive equipping of the local self-defense forces, I learned that the level of Vietcong terror incidents had not been reduced in the past year. One recent survey indicated that Communist infiltration in local self-defense forces was an

suspected cause of the poor showing against local incidents and terror. This situation throws some doubt on official claims that the Vietcong political-military apparatus was severely, if not mortally, decimated during the 1968 Tet offensive and subsequent fighting.

Vietnamization is said to be proceeding well and on schedule, laying the base for increased rates of U.S. withdrawal.

In terms of time, the major bottleneck in Vietnamization is the Vietnamese Air Force—VNAF—where the lead time on training and equipment is longest. Indications are that Vietnamization of the VNAF may not be completed before the end of 1973—calling for a prolonged stay and combat role for U.S. Air Force units, according to opinion in Vietnam and press reports.

President Nixon has pledged to reduce American forces to 184,000 by December 1, 1971. His plans for further reductions after that date have not been announced and probably have not yet been decided.

There is much discussion in Washington and Saigon of a “residual” or “transitional” force, of perhaps 40,000 to 50,000. Both Vietnamese and Americans in Saigon profess that such a residual U.S. force could be decisive as regards the ability of the South Vietnamese Government to survive politically following the withdrawal of other U.S. forces.

The large quantities of valuable material to be returned to the United States is clearly an important factor in planning U.S. withdrawal schedules. Security, advisory, and command and control units are other elements. There can be little doubt that the sheer logistical problems of withdrawal of the massive U.S. presence—men and equipment—is formidable, indeed, if it is to be accomplished in an orderly and efficient way. Political necessity is likely to prove overriding, however, in determining the schedule for U.S. disengagement. I believe that the psychological gains at home and in Vietnam to be gained from early withdrawal should be overriding; I believe it can be made consistent with withdrawal of the very large amounts of valuable materiel which are now in Vietnam.

DRUG AND MORALE PROBLEMS OF U.S. FORCES

It is very apparent in Saigon that U.S. forces in Vietnam are in the throes of a drug crisis—a heroin epidemic is said to have gripped an estimated 15 percent of our servicemen, while use of marijuana, and other narcotics, is said to be very prevalent. The heroin epidemic among U.S. servicemen in Vietnam is fed by very cheap and plentiful supplies of 95 percent heroin—slag—which is smuggled in from expanded new opium poppy fields in Laos, Thailand, and Burma.

Efforts by the Vietnamese authorities to halt the smuggling of heroin into Vietnam, and to crack down on its quasi-open availability around U.S. base areas and in Saigon, have been so far largely ineffective or nonexistent. We received testimony from three representatives on this matter the other day before the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare. These representatives actually had personal ex-

A new, high-priority plan to attack heroin availability problem has recently been formulated by United States and Vietnamese authorities. We must assume that they are acting in good faith. The results have yet to be recorded.

Detection, treatment, and rehabilitation programs for addicts are very inadequate. Procedures are being changed and new crash programs adopted, but one legacy of Vietnam may still well be the dumping of thousands of new heroin addicts back into civilian life in the United States. I am very regretful to say that such a burden would fall heaviest on cities like New York and Los Angeles which are the main centers in the United States for heroin distribution. On top of its present unbearable load of problems, another 10,000 to 20,000 heroin addicts could be the straw which could literally break the back of New York City.

Only slightly less serious than the heroin epidemic among our servicemen in Vietnam is the critical decline of morale and discipline. Fraggings is said to be a fact of life. “Fragging” is a generic term used to denote a variety of coercive acts of indiscipline employed against officers and noncoms. In its original and stricter meaning, “fraggings” relates to the use of fragmentation grenades to kill or maim officers who are unpopular or who issue what some of their men might consider dangerous or otherwise undesirable orders.

Racial tensions are reportedly high among U.S. servicemen and are said to be a factor also in some of these fragging incidents.

POSTWITHDRAWAL AID

Mr. President, the main thing I bring back to report to the Senate concerns the question of postwithdrawal aid.

The economic situation in Vietnam is said to be much improved, though far from satisfactory. In a recent press interview, Ambassador Bunker is reported to have said he is more concerned over economic problems than over military problems in Vietnam. It is said inflation is being contained without stagnating the economy. United States and Vietnamese planners are optimistic that a base can—and is being—built for a rapid expansion and modernization of the still largely subsistence agricultural economy of South Vietnam.

However, the steady decline in the U.S. presence—and U.S. spending—in Vietnam is bringing to a head many crises in a war-inflated and war-distorted economy. Few believe that the Saigon government can survive after the United States withdraws without some \$2 to \$3 billion in annual assistance from the United States for at least several years. Let us remember that Vietnam is now a State whose main occupation is war.

I was informed that planning figures run in the \$2 to \$3 billion range, and that this would include military, as well as economic and budget support assistance. I condition my willingness to vote for an aid program of this magnitude on four criteria: First, fair elections in Vietnam; second, a government that

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domestic order; third, a government which effectively promotes social justice, economic reform, and an acceptable level of honesty; and, fourth, a government which respects the freedoms and democratic rights of its citizenry.

On this basis I felt that I could support congressional appropriations in the \$2 billion range for Vietnam, following the U.S. withdrawal, and I advanced the view that I felt Congress would approve it.

Some have questioned whether these conditions are either too stringent to be achieved or too vague to be enforced. I do not accept this view. In my judgment, and the judgment of many others, the first fatal mistake of the United States in Vietnam was our failure to enforce the conditions for the U.S. aid set forth in President Eisenhower's famous letter to President Diem of October 1, 1954. The

letter asks Diem's government "to give assurances as to the standards of performance it would be able to maintain in the event such aid were supplied." It says that the United States "expects" that "needed reforms" would be undertaken, and calls for a government "so enlightened in purpose and effective in performance that it will be respected at home and abroad."

I have purposely made the "conditions" I have mentioned more precise and specific than those in President Eisenhower's letter. I believe that they should be specifically included in the necessary aid legislation, together with reporting and evaluating procedures to insure that the conditions established legislatively are met.

I base my support for an assistance program of this magnitude on two major considerations. First, I feel that the United States has acquired an obligation to the millions of Vietnamese who have been drawn into the massive U.S. operations within Vietnam and that a Vietnamese government which can meet reasonable standards of performance set would be entitled to our continued financial assistance.

Second, I have the impression that if the Vietnamese Government leaders felt confident of receiving continued large-scale U.S. assistance of the magnitude I have indicated after U.S. withdrawal, the resistance of the Vietnamese Government to early, full withdrawal of U.S. forces would be greatly reduced.

Mr. President, I hope that these observations based on my visit to Vietnam will be of use to my colleagues in this debate. I repeat my intention to vote in support of the McGovern-Hatfield amendment.